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### **Hudson Vicinage to Hold Drug Court Graduation Ceremony**

Hudson Vicinage will hold its 16<sup>th</sup> drug court graduation celebration on Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 12:30 p.m. on the second floor of the William J. Brennan, Jr. Courthouse, 583 Newark Ave., Jersey City.

The event will mark the largest drug court graduation in the vicinage's history, with 28 candidates having successfully completed the program. Another 20 participants will receive certificates for advancing to the fourth and final phase of the drug court program.

Judge Edward J. DeFazio will preside over the event. Family Court Judge Lourdes I. Santiago, who previously served as the Vicinage's drug court judge, will serve as keynote speaker. Criminal Division Presiding Judge Sheila Venable will also address the graduates. Judiciary Voices in Unity, a choir composed of judges, attorneys, and court staff members, will perform.

The drug court program is a highly specialized team process within the existing Superior Court structure that relies upon a unique, collaborative relationship between criminal justice officials and drug treatment professionals to address non-violent, drug-related cases.

Drug court programs are rigorous, requiring completion of four phases during five years of intensive drug and alcohol treatment and testing. Participants follow a tightly structured regimen of treatment and recovery. This level of supervision supports the recovery process, but also allows supervisors to react swiftly to impose appropriate therapeutic sanctions or to reinstate criminal proceedings when participants do not comply with the program.

Hudson's drug court program has more than 470 active participants and an annual retention rate of 84 percent. Program graduates must attain a minimum of one year of continuous sobriety and gain full-time employment while working toward a GED or high school diploma. Graduates must also demonstrate a regular payment history on all court fines and establish a sober community network.

For more information about the graduation ceremony, contact Evan Weiss at 201-795-6882.

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